



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATION AND PERSONNEL WORK IN A LARGE-SCALE ORGANIZATION WITH MANY PLANTS

C. B. SEGER

Chairman, Board of Directors, U. S. Rubber Company

SUCH terms as "Employee Representation" and "Personnel Work" are not to my mind expressive of the message they are intended to convey, although they are commonly used in the discussion of so-called Industrial Relations. What we must consider is that human relationship which should exist between individuals and, in turn, between employees and employers.

The first requisite of proper human relationships is confidence. Confidence results from knowledge and proper understanding based on truth and honesty of purpose. This principle must be recognized and must be respected by both sides before mutual confidence can be established. The real problem, as I see it, is to arrive at the best means of establishing that confidence and creating and cultivating that human relationship which should exist between individuals and likewise between employer and employee. It is conceded that individuals must know each other before mutual confidence can be established and this is equally true between groups of employees and their employer.

There must be an intimate and frequent intercourse between employer and employee. By the very nature of things this intercourse cannot be personal or individual although I for one should like nothing better than personally to know and deal directly with every employee in the organization of which I am a part. This is impracticable. Therefore the point of contact for communication must be through some form of representation or representative body. I believe that the nearest approach to an equivalent of the individual relationship which should exist between employee and employer is through shop councils consisting of elected representatives of

the employees and the local management representing the employer.

Employee Representation should mean nothing more or less than a plan which provides systematic and regular contacts between employer and employee. Such a plan permits employer and employee to talk over matters of mutual interest, whether it be hours of labor, working conditions, wages and production costs, or what not, in such a manner as to constitute a definite procedure by which their conclusions may be made effective. The success of any such effort, however, is determined by the sincerity with which it is entered into both by management and employees.

The development of American business and the introduction into industrial life of many people who are strangers to American ways have greatly complicated our problems. This condition makes it all the more necessary to establish some definite means of contact for the purpose of building up mutual confidence and eliminating misunderstandings.

Something said by the Chairman leads me to make a statement with reference to what I conceive to be the danger of outside interference. I am not looking from the top down; I am looking from the bottom up. I have been at the bottom and I have participated in these problems both as a wage earner and as an executive. I know, and I use that term advisedly, that if both parties, employer as well as employee, will make the proper effort along the lines of establishing human relationships based upon truth and honesty of purpose on both sides, there will never be a friction or a contention or a grievance which cannot be cleared up between those two individuals or between groups of individuals and employers if they are given an opportunity to work out their own salvation, free from outside interference. There must, however, be a sincere effort, and I freely confess and urge that the initial step in that direction must be taken by the employer. Rightly or wrongly, the circumstances that have led up to the present conditions are such that the employer must assume the burden of undoing some things that have been done and taking the initial step to which I have referred. Management must lead and must accept the responsibility for carrying on industry. Intelligent leadership, however, presupposes that leaders will keep those whom they

lead informed and it presupposes also that they will be responsive to those led.

The subject assigned to me specifically refers to an organization with many plants. To my mind this is immaterial as each plant must be considered a separate family and the cultivation of the human relationship must be entirely within the family regardless of what association may exist between that family and other related or non-related families of employees, and regardless of what central employer supervision or control may exist. The problems which arise between management and employees can never be settled on a national or an international basis. Neither can they be settled by legislative action. They must be dealt with at the local plant at which they arise. There is an honest conviction on my part based upon experience that the cure for your disease, whatever it is, must be localized. There is no common remedy applicable to all. There may be a general supervision from the employer's point of view and there may be association of the industrial families, but the real problems are local and local cures must be applied entirely free from outside influences.

If our country is to develop, and if American business is to keep its place in the world's markets, employee and employer in American industry must realize and realize quickly how closely their interests are bound together. The building up of mutual confidence rather than the building up of factions and classes is our problem. I fully believe that the American business man and the American workingman are alive to the necessities of the situation and will meet and solve this problem to their mutual advantage and to the advantage of our country as a whole.